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FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5053
INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0666
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC

UNCLAS ABUJA 000098

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO USTR-AGAMA AND GARDE; PTO FOR HICKEY; LOC FOR USCO
PPINHA
TREASURY FOR PETERS AND HALL
DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS AND 3130/USFC/OIO/ANESA/DHARRIS
USDA/FAS/OTP FOR MCKENZIE
DOJ FOR MKOUAME
SECSTATE PASS TO USAID/AFR FOR ATWOOD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [KIPR](#) [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [EINV](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NEW CUSTOMS COMPTROLLER GENERAL

REF: A. 08 ABUJA 2360 12/3
[1](#)B. 08 ABUJA 2295 11/21 Nov IP team
[1](#)C. 08 ABUJA 1925 9/26
[1](#)D. 08 ABUJA 1275

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - NOT FOR Distro OUTSIDE USG

[1](#)1. (SBU) Former Nigerian Customs Comptroller General Alhaji Hamman Bello Ahmed resigned on January 14, 2009 and handed over his position to Dr. B. E. Nwadialo. H. B. Ahmed is retiring because he has reached the mandatory retirement age of 60. The media has reported that there are tensions within Customs on whether Nwadialo is the correct choice and whether his appointment has been approved by the Ministry of Finance, which has authority over Customs. There has been no official announcement from the Nigerian government regarding his appointment.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Mission is heavily engaged with Customs to - improve intellectual property rights (IPR) enforcement, increase efficiency at the borders for imports; and adoption of a trade policy regime that removes import bans, inline with Nigeria's World Trade Organization commitments (reftels B & D). Customs has already expressed strong interest in collaborating on several USG IP and trade initiatives in 2009:
-- February 3-4, 2009 Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Council Meeting in Washington, DC.
-- April 7-9, 2009 workshop on IP enforcement at the borders.
-- May 2009 workshop with Customs and U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Comment: Nwadialo is an experienced officer, former professor and was Deputy Comptroller General before his appointment. His section has worked closely with the USG in improving Customs engagement on intellectual property rights (IPR) enforcement and was responsible for new regulations published in September 2008 that gave Customs authority to prosecute IPR pirates (reftels A & C). He has participated in IPR training in the United Kingdom and is adjudged to have a vast knowledge of IPR. If Nwadialo's position is solidified, his previous knowledge and cooperation with the USG should lead to improved communication and working relationship with the USG on IPR and trade related issues. End Comment

[1](#)4. (U) This cable was coordinated with ConGen Lagos.

PIASCIK